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GAMING

'Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom' designers explain why latest hit won't get a follow-up

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James Perkins Mastromarino



Series villain Ganondorf, as he appears in Tears of the Kingdom.

Nintendo

Fans of The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom won't be getting an immediate follow-up to the blockbuster game.

The news that a widely-anticipated expansion, or downloadable content (DLC), isn't in development first broke on Japanese site Famitsu. It was also confirmed in an interview NPR conducted with series Producer Eiji Aonuma and Tears of the Kingdom

Director Hidemaro Fujibayashi.

In an emailed response, Aonuma wrote that in Tears of the Kingdom, "we were able to implement all of the elements that we wanted to achieve in this world and this story, so there will not be any DLC. Please continue to enjoy the vast world of Hyrule."

Sponsor Message

Tears of the Kingdom became Nintendo's fastest-selling game, celebrated for the near-boundless creativity it afforded players. Its success may even transfer over to the silver screen, with Universal rumored to be developing a live-action Zelda film after *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* smashed box office records.

Aonuma and Fujibayashi did not address speculation regarding the multimedia future of the franchise, but they did break down their innovative design and responded to criticism of the game's pacing.

The following conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity.

There's been a flood of creativity as players have had the game for a few months. You built the game to adapt to many playstyles, but do any approaches truly surprise you?

Hidemaro Fujibayashi: Right after Breath of the Wild was released, we had the

idea that it might be fun if in Tears of the Kingdom, you could construct things like vehicles by sticking things together, so we did some testing. Based on that experience, we were confident that a variety of things could be done with a system like that and that we could make it into an enjoyable experience, so we developed the final product with the goal of allowing players to create things with as few limitations as possible. Thanks to that, we were able to achieve gameplay that has a fairly high degree of freedom. However, players are making vehicles and creations that are far beyond what we had expected, so we are really amazed at the imagination of our players.



Tears of the Kingdom director Hidemaro Fujibayashi.

Nintendo

Breath of the Wild broke with past titles, while Tears of the Kingdom built directly on its predecessor. Looking ahead, what direction excites you most? How do you balance trying new things and refining past accomplishments?

Eiji Aonuma: After we finished development for the Breath of the Wild DLC, I felt that this world still had more gameplay and surprises for us to create, and the new gameplay that Fujibayashi proposed right around that time was something that was worth doing precisely because its foundation was Breath of the Wild, so we decided to develop that concept as a sequel to Breath of the Wild.

Fujibayashi: It is true that the foundation is Breath of the Wild, but when I am designing a game, I am always thinking about new gameplay that we can provide. What kind of experiences will surprise and delight the player? So we were of course thinking about those things when developing Tears of the Kingdom. If we were to consider doing a Zelda game that is even more different than what we have done in the past, we would want to challenge ourselves to try new things, and I think we would still start with the question "What sort of experience do we want to provide this time?"



Zelda series producer, Eiji Aonuma.

Nintendo

Zelda and Link seem to have had a loving relationship in the years between the events of Breath of the Wild and Tears of the Kingdom. How did you want to develop their dynamic in this sequel?

Fujibayashi: Link is still entrusted with the role of protecting Princess Zelda. Rather than having the developers explain the relationships between the characters, I think it is best for people to play the game for themselves and use their imaginations.

The Depths present limited visibility, higher challenge, and less varied landscapes. How do you respond to criticism that the Depths are monotonous or drags down the game's pacing?

Aonuma: For the Depths in this game, we took the exploration of dark areas, which has been a traditional gameplay element in the series, and adapted it so that it could be done dynamically in a vast space. Having it contrast with the gameplay on the surface and in the sky was an intentional choice in service of our goal of making the gameplay more varied.

Fujibayashi: Our intention for the Depths is that it is an area where the player explores the unknown, and the player must be fully prepared before taking on its challenges. It is also an area where the player is rewarded with many plants and weapons that are either rare or basically unattainable on the surface or in the sky. So, although some players might find it a little difficult at first, I think if players fully prepare for the adventure and exploration and then approach it like a treasure hunt, they are sure to enjoy their time in the Depths.



Link and Zelda, reunited after the events of Breath of the Wild, only to be torn apart at the start of Tears of the Kingdom.

Nintendo

Were there any Zonai devices that you wish you could have included in the full game?

Fujibayashi: We actually thought that there shouldn't be too many types of Zonai devices. Because we thought that it was important to have players take a limited set of functions and appearances and use their ingenuity to create new functions. So at this point there aren't any devices that I wish we could have included, and I am actually glad that we kept the number of devices low, because we have really enjoyed seeing the unbelievable things that the players have created with such limited resources.

Which recent games have inspired new design ideas for you?

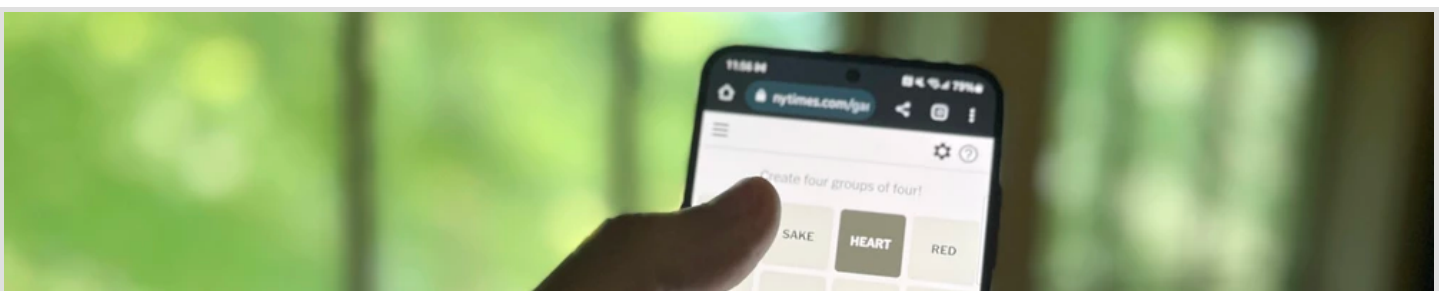
Fujibayashi: It's not a game, but I found a book about the theory behind creating scary haunted houses to be very interesting. It included the specific techniques used to influence the thoughts and actions of the participants (for games, this would be the players) and cause them to feel scared or excited. I was surprised because those techniques were really similar to how we create Zelda games. Tears of the Kingdom includes the Depths, where players feel the excitement as they explore an unknown space, as well as the sky, where players can enjoy pleasant gliding, exhilarating action, and beautiful views. This is not the same as surprising people in a haunted house, but the experiences are created using similar methodology. I would love for players to try out these experiences in the Depths and the sky.

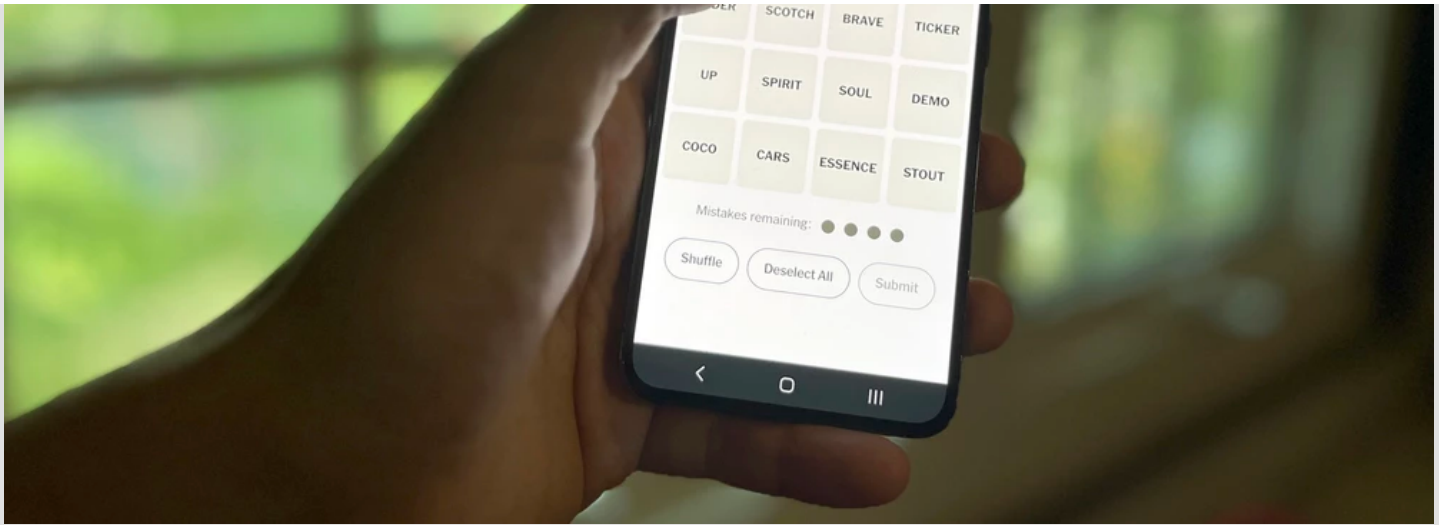
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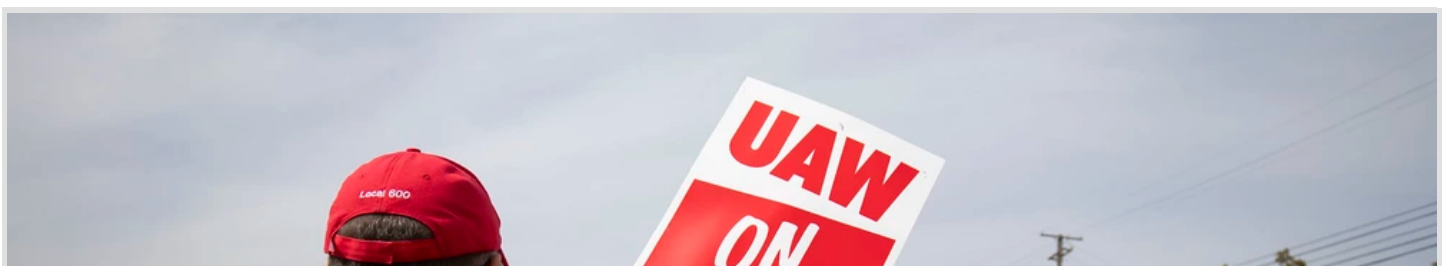
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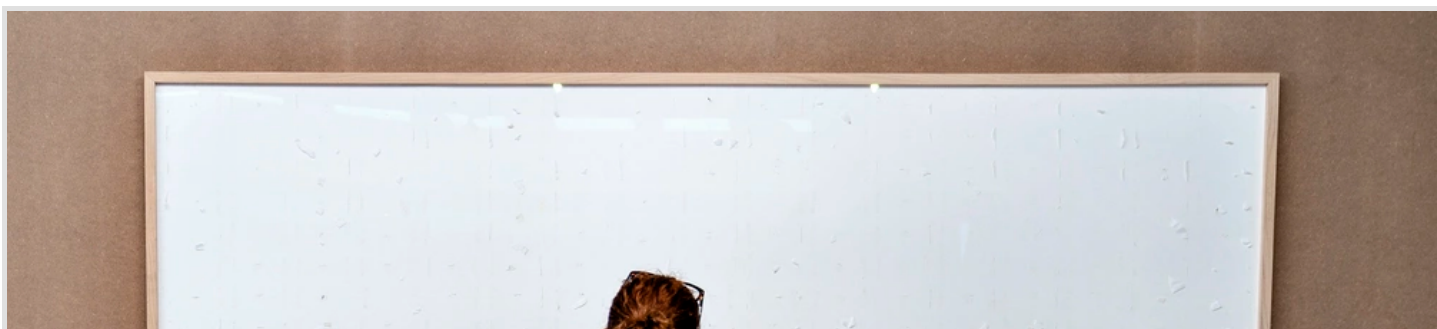
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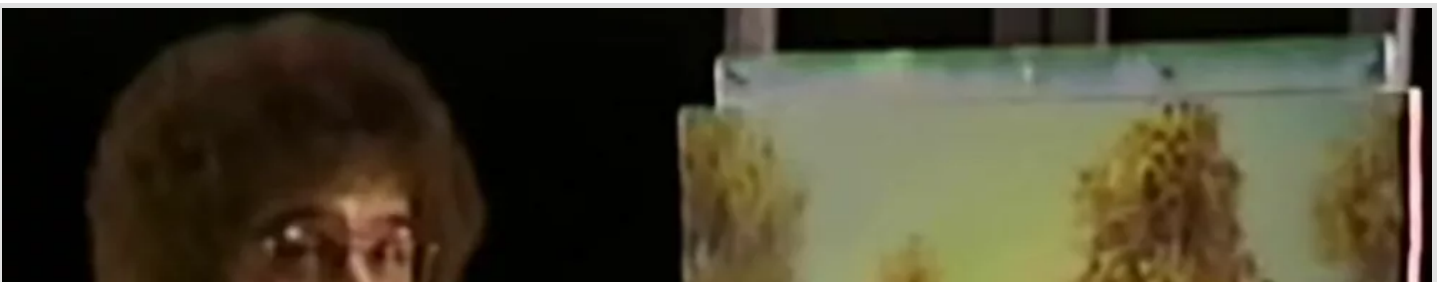
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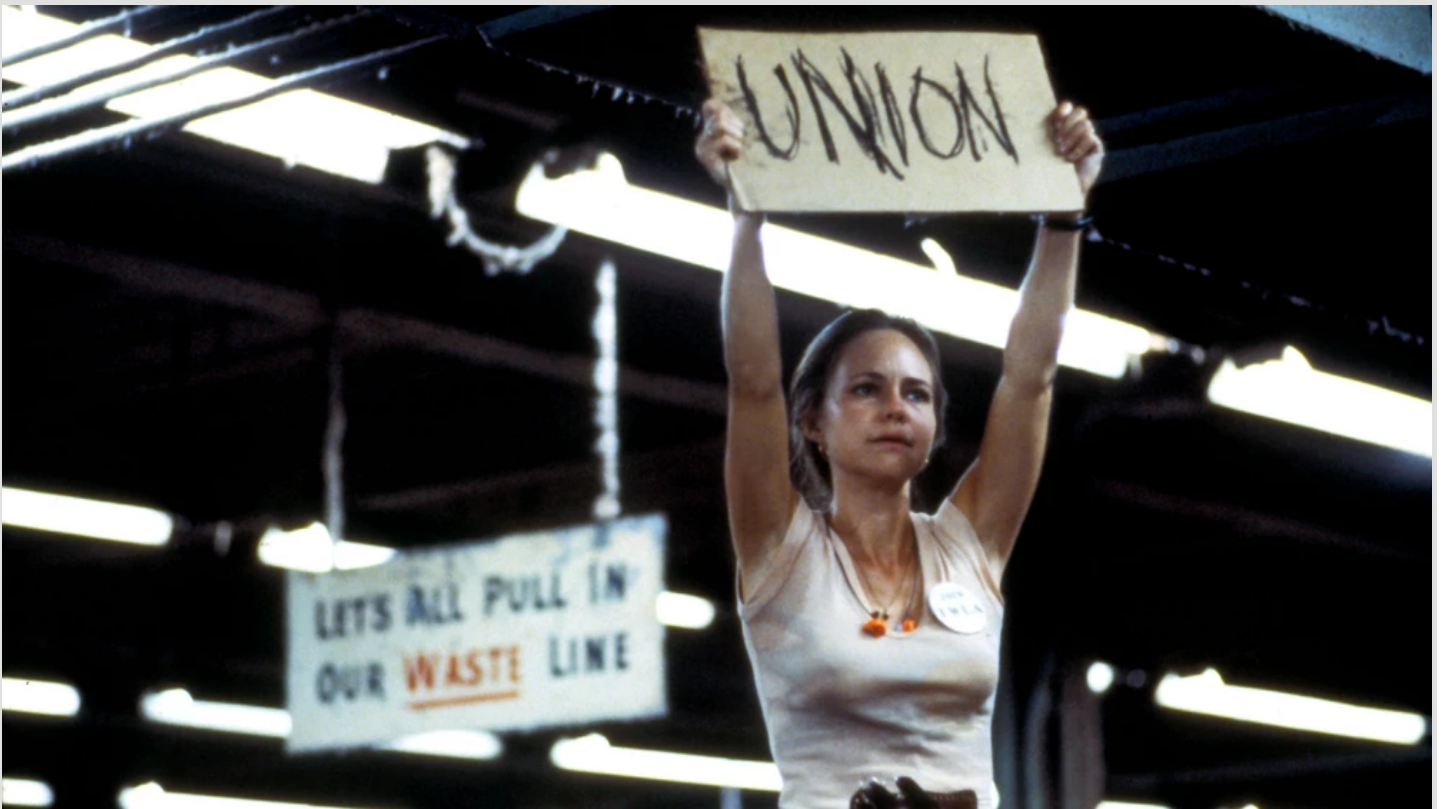
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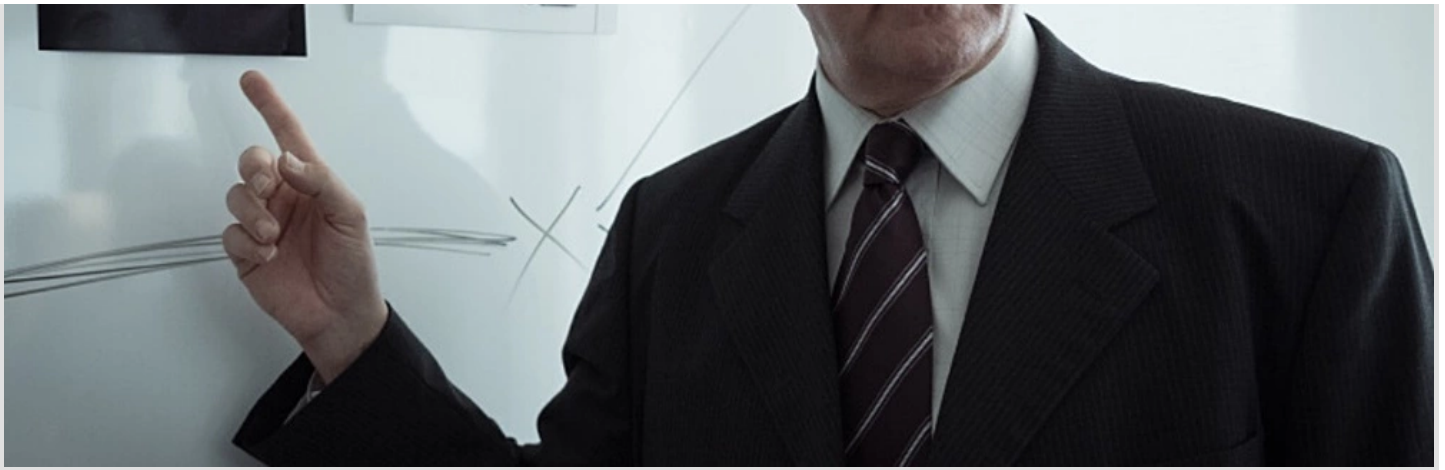
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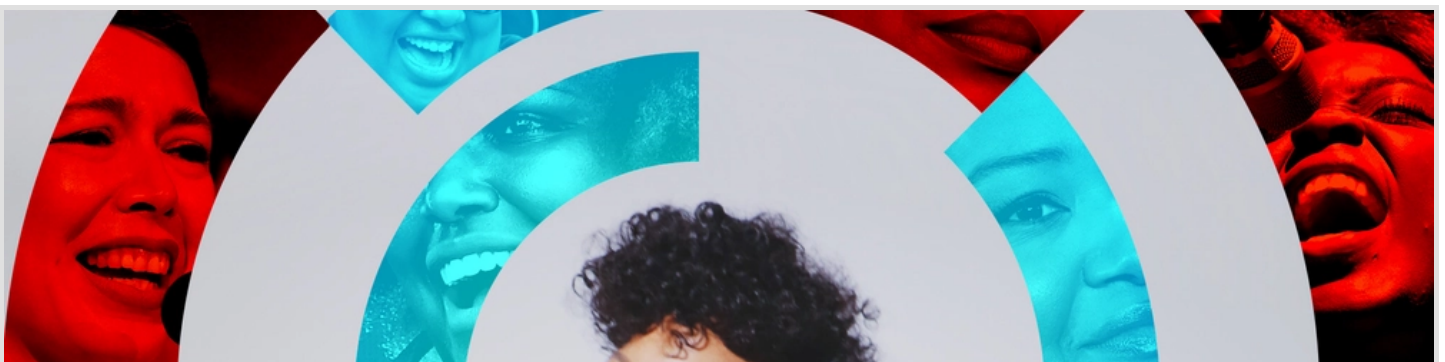
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